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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses how community colleges should effect multidimensional, dynamic, and rapid change. It describes a three-stage paradigm of educational transition: (1) organizations cannot be changed by imposing an external model; (2) there is no objective reality outside an organization's culture; and (3) dynamic change is the result of engagement with internal and external stakeholders as well as events. In developing a team strategy for changing college culture in view of the coming millennium, four suggestions are made: (1) all participants must be committed to helping the college succeed; (2) all members of the college community must support total immersion in an ever-growing, ever-changing community; (3) college personnel must make a commitment to excellence in instruction, programs, and products; and (4) those in the college who control resources must contribute to the college's achievement and maintenance of currency with new technology. Included are descriptions of change-oriented experiences at Hagerstown Community College (Maryland) regarding classroom-based change, work-based change, and collaborative development. (Contains 14 references.) (AS)

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CONFRONTING THE MILLENNIUM: A TEAM STRATEGY FOR CHANGING COLLEGE CULTURE

Fourth Annual Mid-Atlantic College Conference:
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Introduction

In early 1998 a group of national educational leaders came together to promulgate the "Glion Declaration," a statement of the challenges facing higher education at the millennium. Their consensus is precise. The new century confronts us with a bewildering mixture of promise and threat. "The balance between promise and threat is unclear . . . what is clear is that the essential key . . . to human well-being is . . . knowledge."[1] They assess the nature of knowledge needed for the new century. Two critical aspects are the humane use of technology and the "judicious and benevolent use of resources." The result of engaging the millennium must be ". . . an educated workforce, skilled in handling changing and increasingly sophisticated tasks."[2] These goals are noble; what strategies exist to make them a reality?

Early in the last decade of the 20th century, Margaret Wheatley explored the impact that quantum physics, self-organizing systems, and chaos theory have had on human knowledge regarding change. Her findings provide a paradigm for engaging change.

Wheatley began her investigation with a critical insight. "As Einstein often [said]: no problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it. We must learn to see the world anew."[3] The insight provides a three-stage paradigm:

- Organizations cannot be changed by imposing an external model;
- There is no objective reality outside the organizations' culture;
- Dynamic change is the result of engagement with internal and external stakeholders as well as events.[4]

How do community colleges fit into the process of engaging multidimensional, dynamic, and rapid change?

Toward a Knowledge Age

Doucette echoes the perceptions of the Glion Colloquium. He suggests that the prospects for community colleges are mixed. The new challenges presented by alternative delivery systems and for-profit educational providers have the potential to weaken general education. The college's high quality technical education and training programs should prosper. Further, he indicates that community colleges are in the forefront of experimentation with technology and alternative delivery systems. These strategies, when combined with nurturing learners, should assure continued viability for this important sector of higher education.[5] How will the process of change be integrated into established college cultures?

A critical task will be to change the mental models held by college personnel. It is essential that all members of the college community rethink what is and what is not needed as we plan for the future. Roueche and Roueche in a national study of community college collaboration with the communities they serve suggest four components of a new model:

- All participants must adopt a "hefty" measure of courage, commitment, and confidence that the college has the ability to succeed;
- All members of the college community must support "total immersion" in an ever growing, ever changing community;
- College personnel must make a commitment to "excellence and beyond" in instruction, programs, and products;
- Those in the college who control resources must contribute to the college's achievement and maintenance of "currency with new technology."[6]

These components are essential. They are based on a series of assumptions regarding the nature of the 21st century. The first assumption is a series of hypotheses regarding the transformation of community colleges into "knowledge cultures." Norris suggests that the transformation will be based on the following insights:

- Learning will be "the growth industry" of the knowledge age;
- Learning distributed across "diverse physical space" will affect all educational enterprises;
- Colleges must develop new competencies to "reap the opportunities" associated with perpetual, interactive learning;
- Institutional "leadership at all levels" is key to the transformation to a knowledge culture;
- College personnel will be required to develop "new expeditionary products and services" based on creative financial models and "supercharged strategic alliances."[7]

These insights are valid from an institutional perspective. Is there a design that focuses on the client base served by community colleges?

In 1994 the American Council on Education convened a business-higher education forum. The participants worked for two years to design a response system that would prepare the high performance workers needed if the high performance work place of the 21st century is to emerge. The participants identified a series of skills and attitudes needed if college graduates were to respond effectively to the pressures of dynamic technology and global competition. Specific needs include:

- Improved verbal and written communication skills;
- The ability to work and problem solve in teams;
- Flexibility in dealing with problems and change;

- The ability to accept ambiguity comfortably
- The ability to work with people from divers backgrounds;
- Understanding globalization and its implications;
- Adequate ethics training.[8]

Doucette synthesizes the issue precisely: "The community colleges that will survive the frontal assault waged on their mission by information-age . . . providers will be those who understand their niche as learning colleges."[9] Is this paradigm shift viable?

The Hagerstown Community College Experience

Hagerstown Community College is representative of a large sector of the two-year college genre. It is small, 3,000 head count credit students; a product of a post World War II paradigm shift and serves a dynamic, rapidly diversifying community. Over the past four years the college has undergone comprehensive reorganization to engage the requirements of developing a knowledge culture.

The first shift came in 1995 through participation in an NSF/Johns Hopkins/community college instructional development project. The design encompasses all of the aspects outlined above. The characteristics include:

- Classroom-based Change
  - integration of technology to support learning
  - team projects to reinforce leadership and problem solving
  - collaborative presentations designed to develop written and verbal communication skills
  - ethical issues embedded in case problems to provide opportunities for application
  - cross discipline learning opportunities to improve higher order thinking and problem solving

- Work-based Change
  - content reliability established through employer and student focus groups

  - internships for students and faculty to ensure valid content and its application
  - inclusion of private sector personnel in course delivery to improve reliability

- Collaborative Development
  - each cooperating discipline has an advisory committee that provides formative assessment
  - advisory committees work together to validate program content and graduate skill acquisition

The program met NSF requirements, so a second three-year project was approved in June 1998. The college and its partners will disseminate the model through 2001.

The second shift emerged from a meeting in early 1998 with a group of employers drawn from the college's service area. JLG Industries presented a design developed by Knowledge soft, Inc., a private sector technology development and training delivery company with whom they had contracted. The college entered into an informal agreement with Knowledge Soft to use aspects of their design to provide training and credit education. The first aspect focused on assisting businesses to:

- develop strategies for investing in new technology
- re-engineer processes that would correct operational or training weaknesses
- embrace continuous, distributed, and interactive learning as a way to engage constant change[10]

The college's Advanced Technology Center, Technology Innovation Center, and selected credit programs began delivery in 1998. Further, the college adopted a skills-based design, delivery, and assessment model (see Table A).[11] The purpose of the strategy was to create a total redesign. It focuses on organizational and personnel needs that are relevant to educational, business, or agency needs. Also, the model is

compatible with the college's reorganizational design implemented in July 1998. The result is a synergy supporting both internal and external stakeholders. What does the future hold for HCC?

Conclusion: The New Synthesis

Phase one of the college's confrontation of the millennium has been productive. New teams have emerged, new delivery systems have been developed, and new clients have been served. What have we learned? The outcomes identified by Roueche and Roueche reflect the HCC experience. They report that successful community colleges:

- linked the new processes, delivery systems, and organizational designs to the college's core values and mission
- allowed sufficient time for design and application along with patience, financial support, and input from all stakeholders
- maintained fluidity, flexibility, and continuous improvement in all delivery systems and organizational designs
- collected data regularly and systematically to improve performance and provide feedback to internal and external constituencies[12]

Further, questions raised by Blustain of Coopers & Lybrand LLP regarding the process of change management are now answerable.

- Teamwork – people who have never worked together before can learn to cooperate as a team and are productive
- Leadership – the basis is self-directed teams drawing on cross-discipline knowledge and expertise to meet outcomes developed cooperatively between team members and clients
- Skills and Knowledge – allocation of time and resources allows team members to synthesize diverse abilities into a viable delivery system that exceeds client expectations

- Motivation -- team members, all of whom have been with the college for years, willingly and excitedly accepted the opportunity to re-engineer the delivery of their expertise[13]

These findings bode well for HCC's ability to engage the millennium.

As the college enters phase two, what questions remain to be answered? Again, Blustain is useful:

- How well will these processes do at other institution?
- What can we do to perform these processes better?
- Is it possible to even more radically alter fundamental processes to obtain even higher achievement?
- What other changes in our organization, especially culture, skill [placement], and ethos are required to maintain benefits?[14]

HCC's engagement model provides a data gathering structure that will allow stakeholders to respond. In conclusion, strategic transformation provides the opportunity to strengthen the institution; make the culture more supportive of faculty, staff, and students work and learning, most importantly, it is imperative for survival.

See you next year!

TABLE A

KnowledgeSoft, Inc.

A Skills-Based Training/Assessment Model

A skills-based training framework can help ensure the work force is achieving the needed skills. The following six steps should be applied.

Vision
Identify the organization's mission. What do you need to accomplish for continued and future success? What skills will be required to achieve a competitive advantage?

Assess
What skills have been achieved to date? Where are the skill gaps? Is the current skill profile valid? Did it provide a snapshot at a given point in time but is obsolete as people achieve new skills? Once an initial assessment is performed, skill profiles should be maintained and updated in real-time from that point on.

Learning Plans
How will you bring your skill level from where it is today to where it needs to be? Can you design your learning program to address skill needs? Can you provide alternate training delivery options, beyond the classroom, to increase training availability and help decrease costs associated with instructor-led training?

Learning
Load course outlines, curriculum paths, self-paced courses and skill requirements into the system. Begin the focused training effort. Monitor progress. Modify the training content and training media based on assessment results and skill accomplishments.

Post-Learning Assessment
Provide post-training assessments to measure whether or not learning has occurred. Analyze results from assessments to modify training content. Provide managers with the tools they need to identify areas where additional coaching or training may be required.

Benchmark
Review the results of your training program. Identify the new skills that have been achieved. Measure participation in training and success rates through LOIS™ reports.

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